

What is Culture?



Culture

The values, traditions, worldview, and social and political relationships that are created, shared, and transformed by a group of people bound together by a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and/or religion.

(adapted from Sonia Nieto)

What is Culture?

Culture is a dynamic, constantly changing process that is shaped by political, social and economic conditions.

What is Culture?

- People share a myriad of different group identities based on a complex interaction of factors including
 - racial identity,
 - ethnicity,
 - language,
 - gender,
 - socio-economic status (class),
 - age,
 - physical ability,
 - religion,
 - political ideology,
 - interests,
 - and experiences.

What is Culture?

Although general knowledge of the cultures represented in our classrooms is useful, authentic cultural knowledge is gained **one** student at a time.

Eugene García

What Culture Is

- ✓ Dynamic, neither fixed nor static
- ✓ A continuous and cumulative process
- ✓ Learned and shared by a people
- ✓ Behavior and values exhibited by a people
- ✓ Symbolically represented through language and interactions
- ✓ That which guides people in their thinking, feeling and acting

What Culture Is Not

- ✓ Mere artifacts of material used by a people
- ✓ A 'laundry list' of traits and facts
- ✓ Biological traits such as race
- ✓ The idealized and romantic heritage of a people as seen with music, holidays, etc.
- ✓ Higher class status derived from a knowledge of the arts, manners, literature, etc.
- ✓ Something to be bought, sold, or passed out

Culture Exists on 3 Levels

The Symbolic:

Our values and beliefs

The Behavioral:

What we do and how we communicate

The Concrete:

Artifacts, music, foods, and artistic works

The Cultural Iceberg

What is done?

→ Behavior

What is
good/best?

→ Values

What is true?

→ Beliefs

What is real?

→ World View



Life Experiences

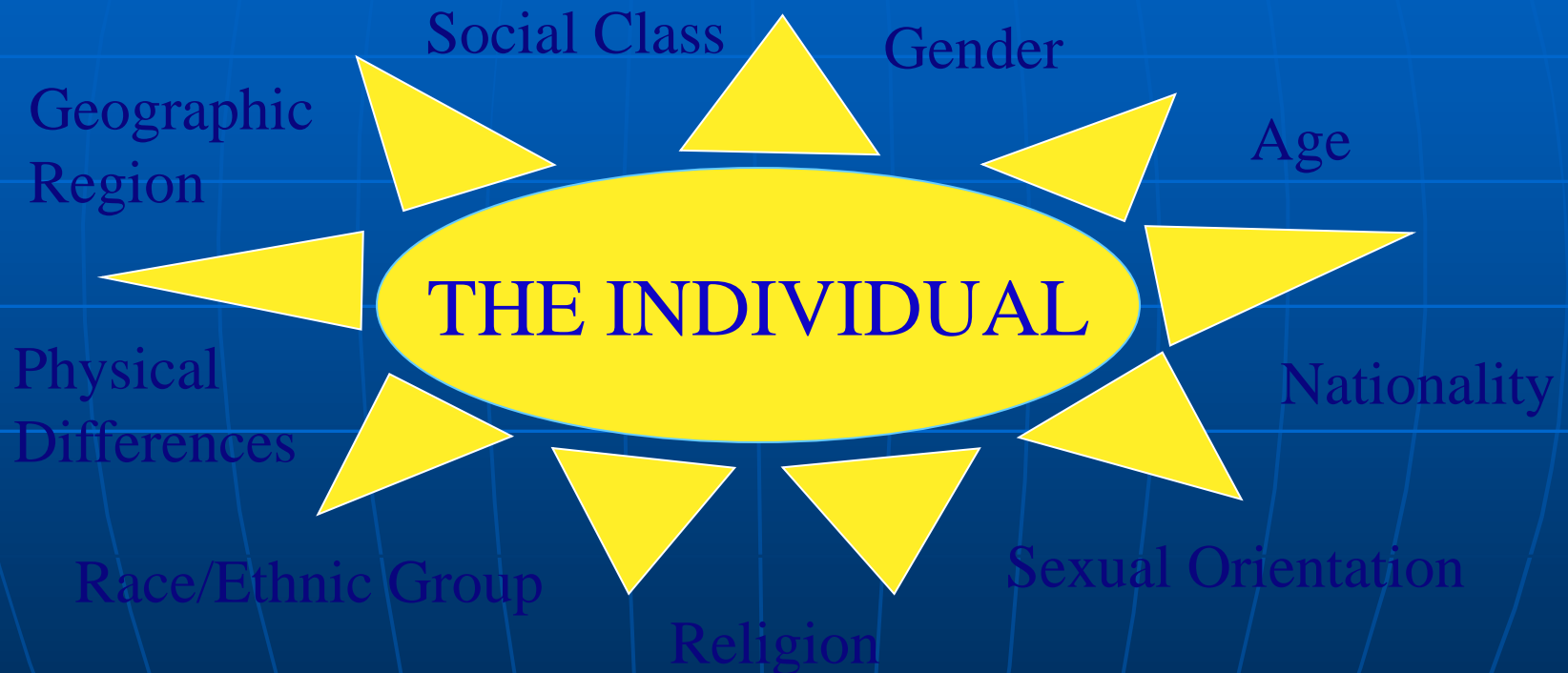


“Perceptions
depend on
our life
experiences
and cultural
orientation.”



Ha! And you were worried they wouldn't like Americans... Why, these people just lit up when I explained we were Virginians!

Individuals Belong to Many Different Groups



Adapted from J.A.Banks, *Multiethnic Education: Theory and Practice*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1988), p. 79.

These group affiliations provide you with your sense of identity and a certain security in the world.

When they become dangerous and damaging to others, is when they become discriminatory.

Racism

Age-ism

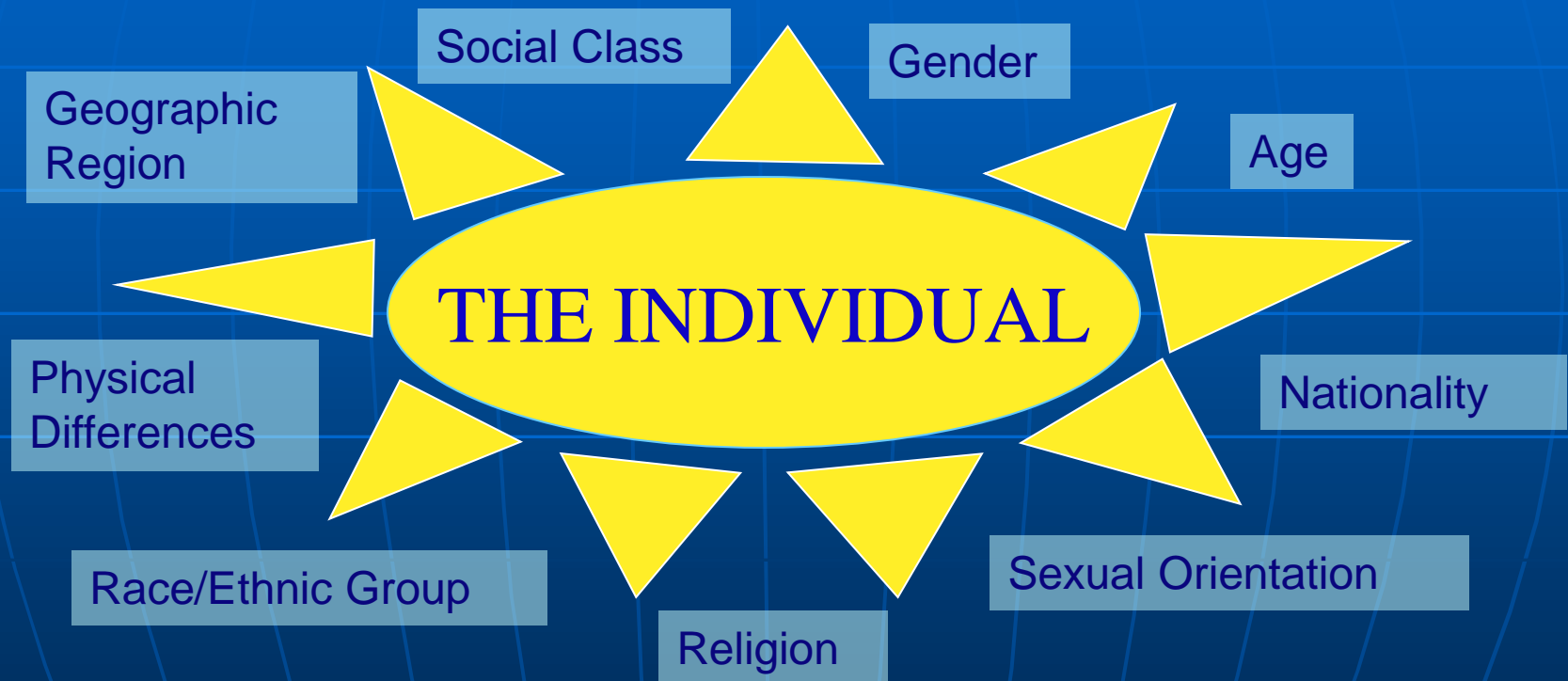
Sexism

Able-ism

Class-ism

Heterosexism

How can these group identifiers be obstacles that culturally diverse students face in schools?



Adapted from J.A.Banks, *Multicultural Education: Theory and Practice*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1988), p. 79.

Identify your own cultural orientation.

Nationality...

Ethnicity...

Race...

Gender...

Economic status...

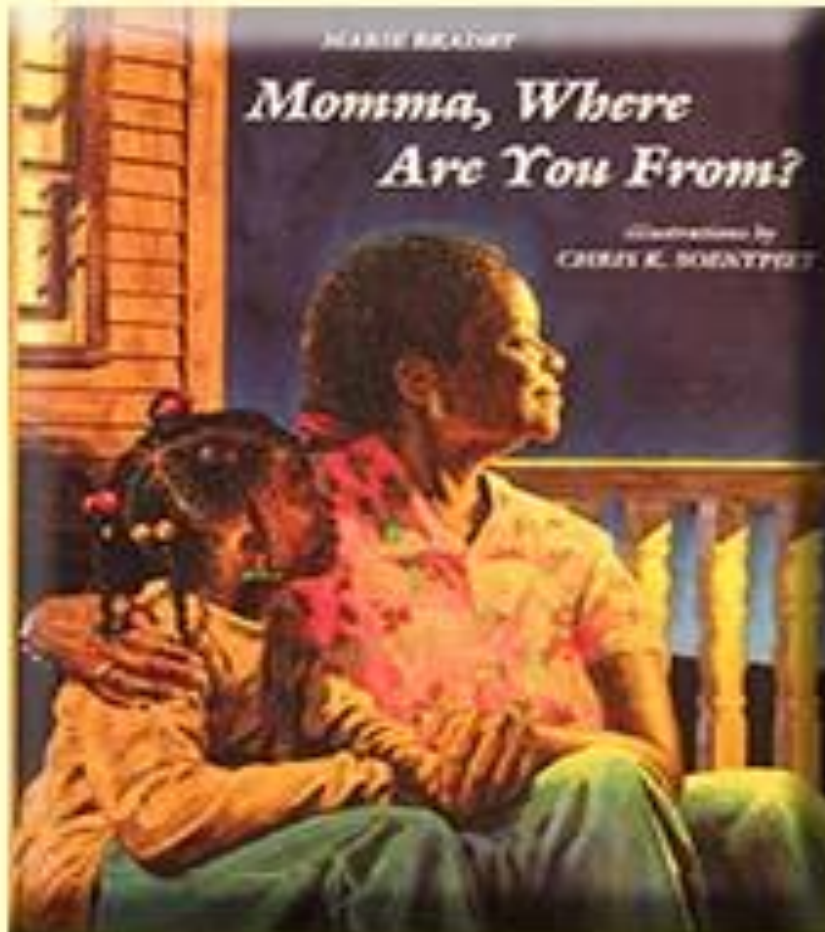
Age...

Geographic region...

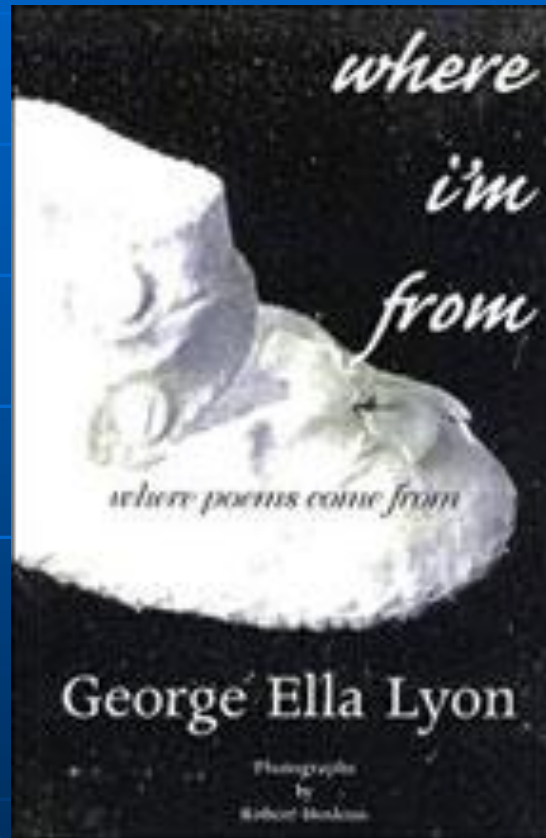
Urban-suburban-rural...

Other...

Where Are You From?



Where Are You From?



Interdisciplinary Concepts of Culture

Culture and
Ethnicity
(ethnic group,
diversity, minorities)

Socialization
(prejudice,
discrimination,
racism, values)

Intercultural
Communication
(perception)

Power and Relations
(power, protest,
resistance)

Migration and
Immigration

Culture, ethnicity and related concepts

Macrocultural group > microcultural group > ethnic group > ethnic minority

- Macroculture: US culture
- Microcultures, smaller groups within the macroculture:
 - Appalachian culture, Southern culture, Western culture
 - gay culture (voluntary group)
 - various ethnic groups

■ Ethnic group:

- Anglo-Saxon, Italian Americans, Mexican-American
 - involuntary microcultural groups with which individuals may or may not identify
 - group has a historic origin, shared heritage and ancestral tradition
 - members (may) share orientation, values, behavioral patterns, and often political and economic interests;
 - individuals may be members of many different groups: religious kinship (association, relationship), economic groups
 - Ethnic identification or ethnicity may not be important to highly assimilated or upper socio-economic class members

■ Ethnic minority group:

- People of color--African Americans, Vietnamese Americans, Hispanics
- Distinguished on the basis of religious characteristics: Muslims, Jewish Americans
 - involuntary microcultural groups with a historic origin, heritage and ancestral tradition; shared orientation, values, behavioral patterns, and often political and economic interests;
 - minority in number, and political and economic power

■ Ethnic Diversity vs. Cultural Assimilation

- The mainstream culture and ethnic minority groups incorporate concepts from each culture and are transformed as they interact;
- Ethnic individuals may be bicultural, especially members in ethnic minorities

■ Cultural Assimilation:

- Process by which an individual or group acquires the cultural traits of a different ethnic or cultural group, mainly for social mobility
 - Culturally assimilated groups, especially color groups, may still be victims of discrimination;
- Types:
 - voluntary –need of upward mobility
 - involuntary –forced assimilation such native migrants (native Americans) or forced immigrants (African Americans) who were forcedly integrated to the mainstream culture

■ Acculturation:

- process by which the mainstream culture incorporates components of ethnic minority cultures: ethnic foods, artifacts

■ Cultural Encapsulation:

- process by which ethnic minority groups form cultural enclaves

Intercultural Communication and Related Concepts

The wider the differences in cultures or microcultures between individuals, the more ineffective communication is likely to be.

Communication often fails across cultures because the message producer and the receiver have few shared symbols and have been socialized within environments in which the same symbols are interpreted differently.

Intercultural Communication and Related Concepts

- Factors that may influence perception:
 - level of identification with a group,
 - culture, ethnicity, and race are strong factors in The United States, a country characterized by inequality, high levels of ethnic discrimination and stratification along racial, social class, and ethnic lines

Power and Related Concepts

Almost every decision is made by those in power to enhance, legitimize and reinforce their power

Movement and related concepts

- Migration: movement of natives or citizens within the same country
 - American Indians, Eskimos, Native Hawaiians, Aleuts
 - Puerto Ricans are migrants to the mainland; not considered immigrants as they became citizens with the passage of the Congressional Jones Acts of 1917.
- Immigration: individuals or groups who have settled in the US culture from a foreign country; legal, illegal, political asylum, etc.

Important Terms

- Culture
 - Macroculture
 - Microculture
 - Ethnic group
 - Ethnic minority
- Encapsulation
- Assimilation:
melting pot
- Acculturation:
salad bowl
- Migration
- Immigration